

A SERMON

PREACHED

IN THE CHAPEL OF TRINITY COLLEGE,

TORONTO,

ON SUNDAY, JUNE 20TH, 1880.

By GEORGE WHITAKER, M.A.,
PROVOST OF TRINITY COLLEGE.

TORONTO:
PRINTED BY ROWSELL & HUTCHISON
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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION
OF TRINITY COLLEGE, TORONTO ;
TO THE GRADUATES OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF TRINITY COLLEGE ;
AND TO THOSE TO WHOM
IT WAS IMMEDIATELY ADDRESSED,
This Farewell Sermon
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
INSCRIBED.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following sermon was preached on Sunday, June 20th, 1880, (being the last Sunday of the Academical year), in full expectation that the writer would leave Canada before the re-assembling of the Students of the College in October. His return to England having, however, been deferred, it was thought expedient to defer also the publication of an address, which had been intended to give expression, on his terminating his connection with the College, to his most earnest convictions and desires in reference to its future usefulness and prosperity.

A SERMON.

“Establish thou the work of our hands upon us ; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.”—*Psalm xc. part of verse 17.*

In addressing you, probably, for the last time from this place, I have, for many reasons, which appear to me weighty, resolved to abstain, as far as possible, from matters of a personal kind. I have already had opportunities of expressing very imperfectly the feelings with which I regard my approaching separation from you ; to many and the most solemn of these feelings no expression can be given, or should be attempted ; those which lie nearer the surface have found, or may find, expression elsewhere. I propose then, at present, to address myself to a duty, which has not unfrequently been urged upon me ; a duty, which, I think, I may more seasonably discharge now, than I could have done at an earlier period ; a duty too, which, I trust, may not be incongruous with this sacred time and place, but may justly claim, as pertaining to God and to His church, to be performed on His day and in His house. I will endeavour, then, to trace the history of the origin of this College ; and, on that history, to base my stedfast conviction of what its future ought to be. Many of the circumstances which led to its foundation are, I believe, unknown to some and forgotten by others. Yet their character is most

significant and instructive. A large grant of the waste lands of the crown was made by King George the Third, in 1791, for the maintenance of religious instruction in this country, according to the forms of the United Church of England and Ireland; and in 1797 a like grant was made for the purposes of education, more especially for the support of Grammar Schools and a University. The work contemplated was for many years delayed, by the slow advance of the Colony in wealth and population during the long European war; and it was not until 1827 that a Royal Charter was granted by King George the Fourth, for erecting a College or University in the Province of Upper Canada. Under this charter the University was generally open to all, without the exaction of any religious test either from Professors or from scholars, yet in order to connect the University, to some extent, with the Church of England, the members of the College council were required to be members of that Church, and to subscribe her articles, as were also the Professor of Divinity and all graduates in that faculty. To satisfy objections raised against these restrictions, they were modified in the reign of King William IV., and all members of the College Council, and all Professors thereafter to be appointed, were required simply to make a declaration that they believed in the authenticity and Divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, and in the doctrine of the Trinity. These modifications were, with the King's assent, introduced into the Royal Charter by an act of the Legislature of Upper Canada, and on this basis the University was established, the foundation stone of

the building being laid April 23rd, 1842, and King's College, as the University was styled, being opened June 8th 1843. It could scarcely be anticipated that the large concessions which had been made, would not create a demand for more. The existence of a Faculty of Divinity in the College, for the exclusive teaching of the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, and also the use of her liturgy within its walls, were regarded as invasions of religious liberty, and on the 30th May, 1849, an Act was passed which took effect on January 1st, 1850, by which the Royal Charter granted to King's College was virtually repealed, being so amended as to retain no longer any of those advantages which the Royal Charter had been designed to secure to members of the Church of England, in respect of the religious education of their children. A very strong feeling was awakened in this country under circumstances so painful, and a great effort was made, an effort nobly aided by the members of our Church at home, and afterwards by our brother Churchmen in the United States, to provide some substitute for the richly endowed institution, of which the members of our Church could no longer avail themselves for the highest purposes for which it had been provided. Bishop Strachan, at the age of 72, undertook a voyage to England in 1850, to advocate the claims of a new College to a Royal Charter, and also to procure material aid for its erection. During his stay in London he had more than one personal interview on the subject of his mission, with the late Sir Robert Peel. The Bishop's account of those interviews is

most interesting, and it is satisfactory to observe how strongly this distinguished statesman recognised the injustice to which our Church had been subjected, in having wrested from her an institution which had been designed for the general benefit of the community, under her guardianship and control. Sir Robert Peel's calamitous death, however, abruptly closed his communications with Bishop Strachan. Such, then, were the conditions under which this College was founded. In the first instance a Provincial Act of Incorporation only was obtained for it, and when the College was opened on January 15th, 1852, it was simply on this basis; our future was still uncertain; we knew not, as yet, under what conditions our students were to obtain degrees. A petition to the Queen for a Royal Charter had, however, been already presented through the Government of Canada, but in 1850, neither the Colonial nor the Imperial Government was disposed to favour the petition; a change of Government at home however took place, and on the 16th July, 1852, the Royal Charter was granted, constituting Trinity College a University. We were thus relieved from all doubt and difficulty, and our earliest students were enabled to prosecute their studies almost from the first, with an assurance that the place in which they were receiving their education was empowered to send them forth with the due credentials to which ability and diligence might entitle them. Sir John Robinson, then Chief Justice of Upper Canada, was installed as our first Chancellor, June 3rd, 1853. Such is a very brief sketch of the circumstances which led to the establishment of Trinity

College, and to its being invested with the power of conferring degrees. Those to whose patient persevering efforts the College and the University, under Divine Providence, owe their existence, would regard, probably, with great surprise and regret, the fact that any among us should be now doubting, whether the position which they achieved for us should be retained or abandoned; and those of us who can recollect what manner of men they were, who then fought our battle, cannot think, without something like indignant emotion, that such a question should be for a moment entertained. I believe, however, that it may be shown that not generous feeling only, but also sound calm reason, may prompt us to hold fast what we have, and have acquired in so unlikely—so unlooked for—a manner.

The proposition that there should be in this Province one University only, having power to confer Degrees in Arts, Law, and Medicine, is one which may be supported by very specious arguments; I am, however, disposed to think that strong counter arguments might be urged, by those whose interest extends to secular education only. These arguments, nevertheless, if such exist, I am content to waive, and to point to those alone which are involved in the transcendent importance of religious training. It will be said— it has been said—to us, “Resign your charter, or suspend your exercise of the powers which it gives you; teach your students, with the advantage which must accrue from the wholesome stimulus furnished by competition with candidates from other colleges, and by the offer of richer prizes.” If Trinity College had been founded only for the purpose of giving secular instruction, this

argument would undoubtedly possess great weight ; but we know that men, whose memory we justly venerate, appealed to Churchmen here, and to Churchmen and Church Societies at home and in the States, for a very different purpose, which purpose was to ensure for the sons of our Church that religious instruction which had unhappily been eliminated from the system of the newly constituted University. We are most solemnly bound, then, to do nothing which may to any extent frustrate this most important object ; and we should be doing very much to frustrate it altogether if we consented to place our charter in abeyance, and to send our students to undergo examinations in Arts at a Provincial University. In making this provision we should be throwing most formidable obstacles in the way of any young man who might desire to enrol himself among our students—we should be telling him, “You will be required to attend lectures, and to pass College examinations, in subjects which will avail you nothing in your University course”—we should be weighting him, by demands on his time and attention, which would place him at an appreciable disadvantage, in respect of other competitors, in the University examinations ; and it would be no matter of surprise if we found many an earnest Churchman, under these circumstances, saying, “I heartily wish that I could send my son to Trinity, but the change which you have seen fit to make compels me, in justice to himself, to send him elsewhere.” Nor would there be any remedy for this, except we should consent to retain the empty name of a Church University, while we gave no distinctive Church

teaching, yielding to the pressure which would inevitably be brought to bear upon us, and ceasing to require a course of study which would be found, under the circumstances which we are contemplating, to discourage and repel those who would otherwise gladly enter within our walls. There are things good in the abstract, which, under certain conditions, cease to be desirable. There are advantages, of no questionable kind, for which it is yet possible to pay too high a price; and I am by no means sure that a price far too high may not be paid—is not even now being paid—for a national system of higher education, when its necessary condition is the elimination of religious teaching. The days in which we live may warn us of the tendency of those systems, which, in respect of religious belief and practice, would attempt to maintain an impartial neutrality, an unimpassioned silence. Is this neutrality always observed—is this silence always maintained? Purely scientific subjects are handled very differently by those who hold, and by those who do not hold the Christian faith; and the system which invokes the aid of the man of science, without regard to his belief, can scarcely hope to secure the services of one who will not, either openly or covertly, assail that which he is under no official obligation to defend. This is not mere presumption; experience attests its truth. Great names may be adduced on both sides—equally possessed of admirable reasoning power, equally devoted to scientific enquiry, equally inspired by the honest love of speculative truth; but, on the one side, we have reverence for God's word in Reve-

lation, restraining hasty theories as to the import of His imperfectly decyphered word in nature ; while, on the other, the absence of such reverence, gives the rein to unbridled speculation, and theories are presumptuously propounded, subversive of the faith of the unlearned and unstable, to be themselves subverted in their turn by others, which are again destined to be as short-lived as their fore-runners. I hold, then, that the purpose for which this College was founded is one, which the temper of the age in which we live is but investing, from year to year, with the more profound importance : that it is still necessary—that it is becoming increasingly necessary—that there should be an educational institution in our midst, independent of those injurious influences of which I have been speaking ; untainted, if it so please God, by the Proteus-like infidelity of the times : an institution where the young may be taught, with all reverence, to confess the common origin of the word and of the works of God, and to acknowledge, in all the majesty and mercy of His two-fold relation to mankind, Him, “by Whom the Father made the worlds, and Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven.” We are bound then, I hold, looking to the purpose of our founders and of the liberal benefactors of this College, faithfully to guard the trust committed to us, and to maintain it as a Church University. Some would, indeed, urge us to make a still greater sacrifice, and to renounce our functions, even as a College, except for Students in Divinity. It is, in their opinion, a vast advantage to a young man, fresh from school, to be thrown into familiar intercourse with

youths of different religious denominations; to unlearn, in converse with them, the narrow prejudices of his earlier training; and to rise to broader and juster views of his relations with his brother men. I doubt very much the benefit of such associations, or rather I doubt not at all how subtly dangerous their influence must be: how sure they will be to impair faith, rather than to inculcate charity: nor can I forget that there now exists in educational institutions, in which secular instruction alone is communicated, a large and, as is to be feared, a rapidly increasing proportion of those who avow no religious belief at all; whose practice is controlled by no religious principle; and to intimate fellowship with whom, no parent can, without guilt, deliberately expose his child. There are some who even avow the persuasion that a training like this is a far better introduction to a course of study for Holy Orders, than the narrow sphere which a Church College presents; for my own part, I think, that the world, with all its laxity of practice and vagueness of opinion rather than belief, is ever near enough to us all; and that the young require far more to be instructed as to the way in which they should go, than to be perplexed and disquieted by a premature encounter with "diver and strange doctrines" and theories.

I have something to say as to the position of this College as a place designed for the training both of lay members and of the clergy of our Church in this Province. And first of the laity—one great evil from which the Church has bitterly suffered in times past, has been the want of an intelligent apprehension of her doctrine and discipline on the part of her lay

members. This must often result in a want of zeal for her welfare, and even where such zeal exists, it cannot be according to knowledge: looking to the past, I think that we may humbly thank God that *something* at least has been done here to form intelligent and devout lay members of our Church: I hope that much more may be done in years to come; and, as we value this hope, I would pray all to whom the interests of the College are entrusted, for this hope's sake, to maintain the College in its integrity as a Church University.

As a place of training for our Clergy, the College is, as I conceive, bound to keep strictly to the ground of the Church of England; making her formularies the guide both of its teaching and of its practice. We should, I hold, be well content with what the Church of England expressly commends to our belief and our observance, not venturing ourselves to act, or to teach others to act, on the hazardous hypothesis that she is always to be understood to permit that which she has not expressly forbidden.

It has sometimes been urged that what we moderns have learned to call "different schools of thought," should be represented in the college, and we have been told that this is the case in the English Universities. It may be so in fact. It is not so in theory or in intention. Men are there appointed to professorships on the ground of their abilities and acquirements, without special reference to their opinions; and certainly in no case with a view to their becoming exponents of the system of any particular school. The attempt to assume this position would, I should say, be entirely

alien to the province of a professor, and to a just estimate of his official duty. We have already had amongst us as professors in this college, gentlemen marked by different shades of opinion, and so long as these differences lie within certain limits, recognized by our Church, they may be productive of good rather than of evil. I humbly conceive that the governing body of this College will do wisely in seeking from those to whom the office of instruction may be hereafter confided, a cordial acceptance of the formularies of our Church, nor can I imagine that any true Churchman can look with just suspicion or dislike on teaching which is confessedly in accordance with these formularies. No School of Theology, in our Church, which is loyally and without reserve attached to her plain teaching, can have any occasion to announce "distinctive principles" of its own; on the contrary, by so doing, it exposes itself at once to the imputation of establishing itself as an *imperium in imperio*, for which the "distinctive principles" of the Church herself are either too broad or too narrow. I am glad to be able to quote the words of a well-known member of the evangelical party in England to this effect, in opposing the adoption of "distinctive principles" for Wycliffe Hall, at Oxford. He said, "our platform must not be narrower than that of the Church of England, must not be less than the whole Prayer Book." It is to be apprehended that there are within our Church extreme men who would rejoice to see the Prayer Book revised, and who have not unreasonable grounds for uneasiness until such revision shall have been brought about. I conceive that in a

Church College like this, our only safety lies in seeking the services of men, who not only do not desire, but would very strongly deprecate, any material changes in our Book of Common Prayer, and who, knowing the peril which must attend any change whatever, are well content that none whatever should be introduced.

No very long time has passed since the establishment of this College, on its existing footing, was most ardently desired and most vigorously prosecuted. I trust it may be very long ere any attempt shall be made to undo, in any respect, the work which was then so happily accomplished. There seemed, for some time, but slight expectation of our obtaining a Royal Charter; and when I consider the very grave issues involved in the fact of our possessing it—the far ampler opportunities which we consequently enjoy of instructing young men in the principles of the Christian faith; when I contrast our present position with that which we should probably have now been occupying had the Charter been withheld, I cannot think that we err in confessing, in this regard, the merciful Providence of God, and in looking upon the privilege which has been accorded to us, as a gift received at His hands, and to be guarded, piously and jealously, as a talent entrusted to us for His glory and for the good of His Church among us. And I think that we may thus guard it with good hope for the future. I have been told that it is hopeless for a foundation, possessing resources no larger than ours, to attempt to hold its ground as a place of general University education.

It must be allowed that we are not at present prepared to meet, as fully as more richly endowed societies, the expense attendant on the teaching of some branches of science, which are now especially popular, and are recommended by their great practical utility; yet we ought not to doubt that the liberality of Churchmen will surely enable us to make the teaching of the College at least *sufficient* in this department; while I am satisfied that we may still give most efficiently, what was formerly regarded as constituting, and does still to a very large extent constitute, the education of a gentleman. It must be by our own fault if we do not continue to enjoy a reputation for solid classical training, and if our mathematical standard does not remain at least equal to that which is maintained elsewhere; and I believe that as the country progresses in wealth and in culture, we shall find, among its best and worthiest families, many who will be glad to seek, in addition to these advantages, the priceless benefits of such an education as can be given only on Christian principles, and under the hallowed shelter of the Church of Christ.

The past leaves to us, as must ever be the case, many a cause for humiliation and regret; but, thank God, it leaves us also many an occasion for gratitude and hope. Let us, then, be of good courage, and offer with trustful hearts the prayer of the text: "And the work of our hands, oh, establish upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it." "That which we have attempted in our feebleness, let Thy Almighty Hand make permanent."

But, remember, it is the 'work of *our* hands' which

we pray God to establish; the *human* work—the *human* effort—however feeble, must be there, to be prospered and established by His almighty power and by His tender mercy. Let us be true to Him—true to the lofty aims and pious counsels of those who preceded us, true to our own sacred principles, as none can be true, save those who have learned to “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen,” to look away from the false glare and glitter of of the world, to that which God Himself accounts to be most precious and most honourable.

On some, to whom I am now speaking, the weight of this responsibility does not as yet rest: they have not yet to advise and act for the well being of the College, and they cannot wisely seek to anticipate the time when this burden will rest upon them. It will come all too soon: meanwhile, during their happy immunity from it, there does rest upon them what should ever be regarded as a most welcome and inspiring obligation, the obligation to advance the welfare of the society, into which they have been admitted, by personal excellence, and by a diligent use of the faculties with which God has endowed them, and of the means of improvement which He has here placed within their reach. The great Bishop Selwyn is still held in grateful remembrance by those who knew him at Eton and at Cambridge, as one who exhibited before them the fair example of a pure and honourable Christian life. We see, in his instance, how great, how glorious, may be the issue of such a boyhood, and of such a youth. Examples, such as his, go very far to prosper and to establish the institutions which they

have adorned. Pray God, then, "the protector of all that trust in Him, without Whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, to increase and multiply upon you His mercy," so that both your example here, and your future conduct in the world may tend, by His grace to establish the work of their hands, who once founded, or who still foster, this College.
